**Breathing life into histology**


Histology can be a dry subject. In medical curricula, it has suffered variably from overexposure to underexposure, to the point where graduates may feel perfectly comfortable identifying normal tissues under the light microscope, or squirm uncomfortably when confronted with the same at a multidisciplinary meeting. Finding a balance between pure information and visual references can be difficult and, to paraphrase Elvis, the reader is likely to plead, “a little less longwinded text, a few more pictures please”.

The second edition of *Functional histology*, by Jeffrey Kerr, strikes a good balance. The book has numerous clear, vivid light micrographs, excellent electron micrographs, and superb drawings and diagrams aimed at describing and explaining the organisation and function of body tissues. Traditionally laid out in systems, the text tells an interesting story for each organ, taking the reader through the structure, microscopic appearance, physiology, and function of each tissue, before delineating common abnormal conditions and clinical features.

Kerr, an Associate Professor of Anatomy and Developmental Biology at Monash University in Melbourne, says he prepared *Functional histology* for “those with an interest in biological science as applied to the health professions and for the research community”. The book more than accomplishes this goal, being suitable for a range of users from medical students and pathology registrars through to researchers in the biological sciences. It is distinguished from other works in the discipline by the use of concise, plain language. The useful, friendly “tips”, scattered throughout the text, further engage the reader. The addition of topical references to molecular biology keep the content current and this, together with the text’s accessible style, will maintain the interest of those returning to histology for the purposes of research or postgraduate study.

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